

Stakes Race Advances



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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CURLIN'S APPROVAL TOPS NEW-LOOK GRADE III MATRON AT CHURCHILL DOWNS

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (Wednesday, May 17, 2017) – Alter Racing Stable Inc.’s **Curlin’s Approval**, impressive winner of this winter’s Hurricane Bertie (Grade III) and Royal Delta (GII) at Gulfstream Park, and **Ashbrook Farm**’s Ashland (GI) winner **Weep No More** headline a competitive cast of 13 fillies and mares that were entered for Saturday’s \$100,000 Matron (GIII) at Churchill Downs.

The Matron will be staged for the 80th time, but this will mark the first renewal of the race at Churchill Downs. Previously contested at Arlington Park, the Louisville track’s Churchill Downs Incorporated sister track in Arlington Heights, Ill., the Matron would have gone on hiatus in 2017 if Churchill Downs Racetrack didn’t step up to host the important Midwest race for fillies and mares.

The Matron is one of two stakes events on Saturday’s 11-race program that also includes a simulcast of Preakness Day action from Baltimore’s Pimlico Race Course. Churchill Downs’ first race is 12:45 p.m. (all times Eastern). The Matron goes as Race 10 at approximately 5:21 p.m. and the 80th running of the \$100,000 Louisville Handicap (GIII), a 1 ½-mile turf marathon for 3-year-olds and up, is the 11th and final race at approximately 5:51 p.m.

The 142nd running of the \$1.5 million Preakness Stakes (GI), the Middle Jewel of the Triple Crown headlined by the Kentucky Derby winner **Always Dreaming**, goes as the 13th of 14 races at Pimlico at approximately 6:45 p.m. The 1 3/16-mile race will be shown on television monitors throughout Churchill Downs, including the massive Big Board.

Multiple graded stakes winner Curlin’s Approval invades the Matron from Florida for trainer **Marty Wolfson** having won five of her nine starters and \$313,315. The 4-year-old daughter of Curlin created a huge impression with her dominant six-length romp in the \$200,000 Royal Delta during Gulfstream Park’s Championship Meet on Feb. 18 for a second straight graded-stakes triumph.

It’s been nine weeks since her last start on March 18 in the \$200,000 Inside Information (GII) when she disappointed and appeared to be flat when finishing fifth as the heavy favorite.

The rested Curlin’s Approval will attempt to land her first win outside of Gulfstream Park on Saturday against a field that includes graded stakes winners Weep No More and **Lady Fog Horn**.

Weep No More, one of two entrees from trainer **Rusty Arnold**’s barn (he also entered **G. Watts Humphrey Jr.’s Improv**), made headlines last spring when she sprung a 30-1 surprise in the \$500,000 Ashland at Keeneland. Afterwards, the Mineshaft filly finished seventh in the Longines Kentucky Oaks (GI), fifth in the Coaching Club American Oaks (GI) and fourth in the Alabama (GI) before receiving some rest and relaxation to further develop. Saturday will mark her first race in nine months. Now age 4, Weep No More boasts a record of 7-3-0—\$407,269.

The Elkstone Group LLC’s two-time Indiana Horse of the Year Lady Fog Horn, trained by **Tony Granitz**, is the field’s top money-earner having banked \$786,273 from 13 victories, four seconds and a trio of thirds in 24 career starts, including a 1 ½-length score in last fall’s \$200,000 Falls City Handicap (GII) at Churchill Downs. The 5-year-old Zavata mare – the richest Indiana-bred female of all-time – will make her third start of the year in the Matron. She weakened in the stretch to finish third in her last start, the \$100,000 Doubledogdare (GIII) on April 21 at Keeneland.

The complete Matron field from the rail out (with jockeys): Weep No More (Joe Rocco Jr.), **Shes a True Beauty** (Shaun Bridgmohan), **Lots o’ Lex** (Jesus Castanon), **Tiger Moth** (Gabriel Saez), Lady Fog Horn (Albin Jimenez), **Belle Hill** (Chris Landeros), Curlin’s Approval (Edgard Zayas), **Divine Elegance** (Miguel Mena), **Naylor** (Malcolm Franklin), **Improv** (James Graham), **Walkabout** (Brian Hernandez Jr.), **Miss Mo Kelly** (David Flores) and **Crooked Stick** (Sophie Doyle).

All entrants will carry 122 pounds except for Curlin’s Approval, who will tote 126.

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The Matron will be contested on dirt for the first time since 2006. It was previously run on Memorial Day Weekend over Arlington Park's synthetic Polytrack surface at 1 1/8 miles. Churchill Downs' Director of Racing **Ben Huffman** shorten the race to 1 1/16 miles so it could serve as a steppingstone to the \$200,000 Fleur de Lis Handicap (GII), which is scheduled four weeks later for fillies and mares at 1 1/8 miles on Saturday, June 17 – the Stephen Foster Handicap "Downs After Dark" undercard.

Churchill Downs admission gates will open Saturday at 11:15 a.m. General Admission is \$5, reserved seating is \$10 and reserved dining packages are \$47. Tickets can be purchased in advance online at ChurchillDowns.com/Tickets. Guests at Churchill Downs will have an opportunity to enjoy a taste of the Preakness with The Black-Eyed Susan, the event's official drink that will be available at locations throughout the track (complete with commemorative glass). Also, Levy Restaurants plans to sell Crab Cake Sandwiches on the second floor of the Clubhouse.

FULL BROTHERS FACE TWILIGHT ECLIPSE IN GRADE III LOUISVILLE HANDICAP

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (Wednesday, May 17, 2017) – Five-year-old **Bullards Alley**, the 2016 Louisville Handicap victor, is slated to compete against his 4-year-old full brother **Nessy** in Saturday's \$100,000 Louisville Handicap (Grade III) at Churchill Downs.

The Louisville Handicap, a 1 ½-mile marathon over the Matt Winn Turf Course, is one of two stakes events on the 11-race program that also includes a simulcast of Preakness Day action from Baltimore's Pimlico Race Course. Churchill Downs' first race is 12:45 p.m. (all times Eastern). The \$100,000 Matron (GIII), for fillies and mares at 1 1/16 miles, is Race 10 at 5:21 p.m. and the Louisville Handicap is carded as the 11th and final race at 5:51 p.m.

The 142nd running of the \$1.5 million Preakness Stakes (GI), the Middle Jewel of the Triple Crown headlined by the Kentucky Derby winner **Always Dreaming**, goes as the 13th of 14 races at Pimlico at approximately 6:45 p.m. The race will be shown on television monitors throughout Churchill Downs, including the massive Big Board.

With a 29-5-3-5 record and \$407,048 in earnings, **Wayne Spalding** and **Faron McCubbins**' Bullards Alley is trained by **Tim Glyshaw** and will be ridden by **Marcelino Pedroza**.

Nessy, owned by **Sierra Farm** and trained by **Ian Wilkes**, has a record of 12-1-3-5 with \$102,880 in earnings and will be piloted by **Brian Hernandez Jr.**

Bullards Alley and Nessy are sons of Flower Alley out of the Kris S. mare Flower Forest.

Both horses are scheduled to tackle 10 other rivals including multiple graded stakes winner **Twilight Eclipse**. The 8-year-old Kentucky-bred son of Purim has earnings of \$2,102,953 with a record of 39-8-5-11. Owned by **West Point Thoroughbreds** and trained by **Graham Motion**, Twilight Eclipse will be making his first start at Churchill Downs. He is the 120-pound high weight.

The Louisville Handicap field from the rail out (with jockeys and assigned weight): **Generous Kitten** (Miguel Mena, 115 pounds); **Grey Wizard** (David Flores, 113); Nessy (Hernandez, 111); **Some In Tieme** (BRZ) (Manny Cruz, 116); **Kaigun** (Edgard Zayas, 118); Twilight Eclipse (James Graham, 120); **Reporting Star** (Joe Rocco Jr., 118); **Street Fashion** (Chris Landeros, 115); **Danish Dynaformer** (Gabriel Saez, 119); **Patrick's Day** (Declan Cannon, 114); Bullards Alley (Pedroza, 116); **Gold Shield** (Shaun Bridgmohan, 115).

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